

chureyard of Petersham, Surrey. In the presence of about 300 visitors, including representatives of the Canadian government, the Lord Mayor of London (Sir Frederick Wells) planted a 5-ft. high specimen of the madrona (*Arbutus Menziesii*) supplied by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. The madrona is native in western North America, from British Columbia to California, and is noteworthy as being the largest representative of the Ericaceae. Its name commemorates Archibald Menzies, surgeon and botanist to the expedition, who was the first of many botanists to visit and collect at King George's Sound.

On his return from the Pacific, Vancouver settled in Surrey, first at Richmond and then at the neighbouring village of Petersham, to complete the account of his voyage which was published in the year of his death, 1798, with the title, *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean and Round the World*. An account of King George's Sound is given in vol. 1, chapters 2 and 3 of this work.

—J. SOUSTER, Kew, Surrey, U.K.

A Strange "Ant-friend" Caterpillar.—Early in November, 1948 the Museum received a strange caterpillar found at Boyup Brook by a school-girl, Maureen Buttriss. The creature was shaped rather like a wood-louse, was about $\frac{3}{8}$ in. in length, had a corrugated surface and was coloured a rich blue, the summits of the folds being bright red. It would seem from previous observations that the moth lays its eggs upon some homopterous insect upon which the caterpillar feeds in its early stages. It then pupates and in due course emerges not as a moth but as another caterpillar which makes its way to an ants' nest, where it again feeds and duly pupates, in this case giving rise to an insignificant brown moth—a specimen of which was bred out at the Museum in 1941. A Cyclotornid moth with a similar life history was described by P. F. Dodd in north Queensland some 38 years ago. There is no mention in the literature of this family being found in any other part of the continent, outside of South-western Australia. The family contains only one described genus, *Cyclotorna*, to which our specimens probably belong though they have not yet been taxonomically studied. The Boyup Brook caterpillar was found in the nest of the well-known meat ant (*Iridomyrmex detectus*).

—L. GLAUERT, W.A. Museum, Perth.

An Enormous Ant Colony.—A colony of the gravelly meat ant *Iridomyrmex detectus* found on the way to the Cascades, near Gosnells, during the club excursion on September 5, 1948, was measured approximately and found to be of enormous size. The main body of the colony extended downhill in a south-eastward direction over a length of over 900 yards and had 17 mounds all connected by busy lines of workers. Lateral trails connected some of the main mounds with side mounds. In one case there was a side-mound 38 yards to the south-west, connected by trail to another mound 72 yards to the west, the latter in turn connected to a smaller mound 13 yards to the north-west. In another case the trail from the main

mound ran southwards 14 yards to a mound, then north-westwards 47 yards to another mound, which was in turn connected to a fourth mound 67 yards away north of west, whence the trail continued another 33 yards to the north-west. Another trail to the south-west connected a side-mound after 13 yards, a further side-mound after another 59 yards, and a smaller side-mound after 6 yards. In another case a side-mound was connected to the main mound by a trail 73 yards long. From each side-mound trails of scouts extended into the bush. It is hoped to make an accurate survey of the whole colony at a later stage. Thanks are due to the Government Entomologist for determining the species.

—J. GENTILI and V. N. SERVENTY, Perth.

Growth of the Blackboy.—Some 30 years ago I took notice of many clumps of blackboys as to their height and length of their branches. These today are some three feet longer or higher. Many now are straggly plants breaking off with the length. In 1913 I chopped the head out of a single-stemmed blackboy. It recovered and today has three branches, three feet long. In another case some young ones came up on a piece of land that had been ploughed; one survived 25 years but died after a fire had got it, when it was about the size of the crown of a hat. I have often seen a wisp of new leaves or rushes grow from the stump of one cut down but not to survive long, for cattle eat these when young. Actually I believe the blackboy grows a foot in 10 years. The flattened leaf stem that forms the peel of the plant is for some years loosely packed but in course of time becomes tightly packed under stress of pressure on expansion of the heart growth and compression downwards by a new growth of top. This accounts for a slowing up appearance. A blackboy hardly grows at all where stock can get at its young tops but if it is beyond their reach it grows comparatively quickly. Also in unsuitable soils and weather conditions it may always be a short stunted, slow-growing plant. The soil that suits it is the deep black loam between granite rocks among the hills, associated with red gum or marri trees.

—J. M. HARVEY, Thomson's Brook.

Tree Martin (*Hylochelidon nigricans*) Nesting in Wooden Buildings.—On July 26, 1947, I noted a number of Tree Martins under shop verandahs at Perenjori. This behaviour on the part of these birds seemed unusual, but I concluded that a sheltered perch was the only attraction. When I next visited Perenjori, on September 5, Tree Martins were again in evidence and were apparently breeding. One bird was observed at a nest under a shop verandah. The site was a narrow recess between two rafters. A considerable amount of mud had been used to build up the front of the nest, which, in fact, superficially resembled that of a Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*), except that it was built on the top of a beam and not on a vertical support. Martins were again noted under verandahs at Perenjori on July 17, 1948.

Tree Martins were apparently breeding under the eaves of the hotel at Morawa when I visited that town on August 29, 1948.